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OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Likelihood of a Communist Takeover in Iraq

The Situation

1. The situation in Iraq remains confused and our information inadequate for a confident estimate. However, we have become increasingly concerned over the possibility of a Communist takeover.

2. Prime Minister Kassim is probably not a Communist, but in his determination to hold Iraq free of Egyptian domination he has put himself into a position of hostility to the Arab nationalist groups, civilian and military, which favor Nasser's brand of Arab neutralism and independence of great powers. In his contest with these groups, Kassim has accepted the support of the Iraqi Communists and the leftist National Democratic Party, which is closely associated with the Communists. The NDP leader, Kamil Chaderchi, has become one of Kassim's closest advisers.

3. Under Kassim people who probably are Communists or near-Communists have assumed key posts in the government, e.g., Kassim's

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Aide de Camp, the Directors of National and Baghdad Police, the Director of Military Intelligence, and the Director of Broadcasting. Some of these have replaced officials opposed to Kassim's policy of dependence on the Communists. We are unable to ascertain Kassim's relationship with the Communists and near-Communists on his staff or in his government. It is not clear whether he is in charge and could, for instance, alter the viciously anti-Western broadcasts on Iraqi radio if he wished. It appears that a number of non-Communist officials in his government are uncertain of his motives and of his relationship with the Communists. We believe it likely that he still feels that he is in control and that he is using the Communists for his own purposes, but we are uncertain about his ability to take any action not approved by the Communists.

4. Our information on the Communists in Iraq is extremely meagre. We believe that at the time of the revolution there were only about two thousand Communists. These had some support among professional and intellectual groups and some small ability to call out street mobs. They had been effectively harassed by Nuri Said for years, however, and had few leaders or resources in Iraq. The release of all political prisoners after the revolution immediately improved the Communist position, and there have been evidences that

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it has been further strengthened. We estimate that several hundred Iraqi Communists have recently returned from the Soviet Bloc and Communist China. Many of these men had there acquired technical skills which have facilitated their efforts to take over key government jobs. It also appears probable that the Iraqi Communists are receiving additional help in the form of financial assistance and guidance from the Soviet Union.

5. The non-Communist Arab Nationalists in Iraq were all meager supporters of Kassim and the revolutionary government until the conflict broke out between Kassim and Arif who advocated close association between Iraq and the UAR. After Arif's return to Baghdad and his arrest, some of his followers in the Army were also arrested. This move and Kassim's growing dependence upon Communist support apparently led to the development of an anti-Kassim opposition, including anti-Communists and supporters of Arab nationalist independence. Some of this opposition was apparently involved in an Egyptian-supported plot which Kassim discovered. We believe that many of the key members of the opposition to Kassim have been rounded up and that its resources have been greatly reduced.

6. The issues between Kassim and his opposition have not yet been clearly delineated. If it becomes clear that Kassim and his

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government, under Communist influence, are threatening independent Arab nationalism, important additional forces may be drawn into the contest. The most important of these are probably the senior officers of the commands away from Baghdad. There are probably numerous civilian Arab nationalist leaders of the Baath and Istiqlal groups, some of whom are now in Kassim's government, who would throw their weight against Kassim if the issue of Communist influence were clearly drawn. However, these leaders do not command sufficient support to enable them successfully to challenge Kassim's position without the support of the military.

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